



Providing Guidance for Business Growth for 30 Years

March 31, 2014

In Today's Weekly Connection

- ✦ **SBA Honors Nation's Top Small Businesses**
- ✦ **How Small Businesses Can Get Products Into Campus Stores**
- ✦ **Program Success of the Week – Rendleman's Orchards**
- ✦ **Resource of the Week – Home and Small Business Security**
- ✦ **Neoserra/WebCATS Update – Impact Survey Out This Week**
- ✦ **Moves and News**
- ✦ **America's SBDC Network Connect**

SBA Honors Nation's Top Small Businesses

Winners to be formally recognized May 15-16 in Washington, D.C. - WASHINGTON – From architecture to bakeries, to consulting firms and woodworking - these are just a few of the businesses that will be recognized by the U.S. Small Business Administration this year in Washington, D.C., May 15-16.

Small Business Person of the Year winners from the 50 states, the District of Columbia, Puerto Rico and Guam will gather in Washington during National Small Business Week where one of them will be selected as the 2014 National Small Business Person of the Year. While in Washington the winners will have opportunities to meet with top SBA officials and national business leaders.

The winners were recently notified by SBA Assistant Administrator Fred Baldassaro who stated, "Your hard work, innovative ideas, and dedication to your community have helped you succeed. The SBA is pleased to recognize your achievements and your role in driving our nation's economic growth."

Each year since 1963, the president has issued a proclamation calling for the celebration of National Small Business Week. SBA recognizes outstanding small business owners for their personal successes and contributions to our nation. Click here for the list of winners: <http://www.sba.gov/sites/default/files/NSBW%202014%20-%20SBPOY%20Winners%20List.pdf>

How Small Businesses Can Get Products Into Campus Stores

By Karen E. Klein on *businessweek.com*, 3/21/14 - Since he founded it in 2008, Jim McFarland's sports bottle company, [FLEXR](#), struggled to get shelf space in athletic stores and online retail sites catering to runners and cyclists. McFarland, who patented the bottle's disposable liner design, kept his day job at an aeronautic engineering company while struggling to break even on his five-employee Chino (Calif.) business.

FLEXR's prospects brightened in 2012, after an apologetic retailer turned McFarland down but suggested the bottles might sell better branded with college logos. At a trade show last year, the company's U.S.-made, BPA-free bottles got noticed by a collegiate licensing agency interested in selling branded editions on campus bookstores and on school websites. Now, McFarland has contracts with several major universities, including the University of Texas at Austin and the University of North Carolina—both schools competing in the NCAA basketball tournament—as well as numerous private and community colleges around the country. And he has signed a major distribution deal for his products that could get them into 4,000 campus bookstores by the end of 2014.

"This is going to be a major jump-start for us. We made about \$120,000 in 2013, but we could triple or quadruple that this year," McFarland says. "I'm expecting to hire 15 or more new employees." In 2013 the sale of licensed products such as sports team logos and celebrity images amounted to \$110 billion in the U.S. and Canada, according to the International Licensing Industry Merchandisers' Association (LIMA), a trade group. The practice can be a lucrative avenue for small businesses, allowing them to boost sales and increase customer awareness of their products. But how does an entrepreneur tackle the often-confusing world of licensing deals and navigate legal contracts, royalty payments, and distribution?

<http://www.businessweek.com/articles/2014-03-21/how-small-businesses-can-get-products-into-campus-stores#r=nav-r-story>

Program Success of the Week – Rendleman's Orchards

Rendleman Orchards in Alto Pass has been a family business since 1873 as well as the family home. John and Isabelle Rendleman started farming 88 acres raising chickens, corn and cows. Succeeding generations grew the farm that is now an orchard. Rendleman Orchards is now considered the top peach production site in Illinois.

The family also has a long history with the Illinois Small Business Development Center at Southern Illinois University at Carbondale and Shawnee Community College having been a client since 2001. Currently, the SBDC assists Rendleman's with accounting and marketing services.

The original farmhouse still stands and houses the family office. The oldest living member, Helen Rendleman Sirles, 103 years old, still lives here. She is also the granddaughter of the founding family. Helen retired in January 2014, but she still signs payroll checks.

Michelle Sirles, Assistant Vice-president, just joined the company in January 2014 after a career in marketing and graphic design. She said she is excited to be a part of the family firm and is integrating her skills. Her husband, Wayne D. Sirles, has always been in the family business.

Secretary and Treasurer Betty Sirles, Michelle's mother-in-law, said that a common misconception is that farming is still old-fashioned. "Farming today is a very high tech business," she said. The fruit might be picked the exact same way it was 140 years ago, but the rest of it has changed drastically. Betty said it has to change in order to keep up with the rest of the world.

Michelle said that management attends meetings and classes, often consisting of other farm families, to keep up with the latest business trends and technology. This also includes food safety programs, which are very detailed to make sure each piece of fruit can be traced back to its origins. All of the packaging and record keeping is completed on the farm before the produce is sent to markets.

Rendleman's employed 87 people last year; include the field workers, machinery operators, management, market and seasonal packing workers. Betty said the seasonal packers are all local people, not migrants.

She said the family calls their legacy, "Riding on the shoulders of past generations." Each generation has done something that allowed the current generation to have what the orchard is today.

Resource of the Week – Home and Small Business Security

See the link below for tips and articles about personal and small business security.

<http://homeandsmallbusinesssecurity.com>

Neoserra/WebCATS Update – Impact Survey Out This Week

The latest impact survey is going out as you receive this. In an effort to increase response rates the survey email will appear to be coming from the client's home center. Surveys are sent to clients active from 4/1/13. Responses will still be directed to Tom Becker. Please consider contacting clients who you know have impact to help them complete the survey correctly. Please contact Tom Becker with questions at Tom.becker@illinois.gov or 217/558-6303. Thank you

Moves and News

Women-Owned Business Federal Contracts Program Office Hours

The SBA's Office of Women's Business Ownership Presents: The Women-Owned Business Federal Contract Program Office Hours - The U.S. Small Business Administration's Office of Women's Business Ownership is pleased to announce "Office Hours" to educate the public and the SBA's resource partners on the Women-Owned Small Business Federal Contract Program. The Women-Owned Small Business Federal Contract Program presents an opportunity for firms to increase their presence in the federal marketplace. The federal government is the biggest buyer in the world and is a must-have customer for women-owned companies.

The Office Hours will begin on Thursday, March 20th and will continue through Thursday, May 1st. Office hours will be **every Tuesday and Thursday from 2 pm to 3 pm, eastern daylight time**. The call-in number is: **888-858-2144, and the access code is 5117913**. To view the slide presentation, log on to: <https://www.connectmeeting.att.com> and enter the call-in number for the Meeting Number, and the access code for the Code.

America's SBDC Network Connect

Please [CLICK HERE](#) to see the March 27th, 2014 edition of [America's SBDC Network Connect newsletter](#).

=====

The **WEEKLY CONNECTION** is distributed by the Illinois SBDC and DCEO Office of Entrepreneurship, Innovation & Technology each Monday to members of the DCEO Illinois SBDC Network to provide the service delivery partners with regular updates on small business issues, opportunities and resources. You may send any information to share with the Illinois SBDC Network to Tom.Becker@illinois.gov. Please feel free to forward this update to other interested resource providers and key stakeholders.

=====

Accredited Member - America's Small Business Development Centers (ASBDC)

